

**Second Chance Act Prisoner Reentry Initiative
FY 2009 Competitive Grant Announcement for Demonstration Grants
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

1. What are the purposes and expectations for this program?

The Second Chance Act Prisoner Reentry Initiative strengthens jurisdictions characterized by large numbers of returning offenders. Within the context of this initiative, “reentry” is not envisioned to be a specific program but rather an evidence-based process which begins with initial incarceration and ends with successful community reintegration, evidenced by lack of recidivism. Awarded projects should provide offenders in prisons or jails with all necessary services that include:

- Providing offenders with educational, literacy, vocational, and job placement services while incarcerated or detained.
- Providing full continuum of substance abuse treatment and services.
- Coordinating supervision and comprehensive services upon release.
- Providing programs that encourage offenders to develop safe, healthy, and responsible family relationships.
- Providing programs that involve the entire family in comprehensive reentry process.
- Encouraging the involvement of prison or jail mentors in the reentry process and enabling those mentors to remain in contact with offenders while in custody and after reentry into the community.
- Providing victim-appropriate services, encouraging the timely and complete payment of restitution and fines by offenders to victims, and providing services such as security and counseling to victims upon release of offenders.
- Protecting communities against dangerous offenders by using validated assessment tools to assess the risk factors and treatment needs of returning inmates and developing or adopting procedures to ensure that dangerous felons are not released from prison prematurely.

2. What are the eligibility requirements under this program?

State and local government agencies and federally recognized Indian tribes are eligible to apply under this program. Potential applicants must adhere to all of the eligibility and funding requirements of the program.

3. What are the allowable uses of funding under this program?

Allowable uses of funds can include project initiatives to enhance a successful transition from incarceration to the community that include: pre-release assessment and case planning, mentorship, housing, education, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, services to enhance family reunification, job training and readiness, and post-release case management and supervision. As required by the Second Chance Act,

demonstration projects must have as a goal the reduction of recidivism by 50 percent within a five-year period.

4. What is the selection process for grant awards under the program?

All applications will be peer reviewed based on the solicitation requirements. The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Director will then make award recommendations to the Office of Justice Programs' Assistant Attorney General, who will make final determinations.

5. Are there mandatory requirements for submitting an application?

In order to be eligible to apply for funding, the jurisdiction preparing the application must have developed a reentry strategic plan that includes a detailed implementation schedule as well as extensive evidence of collaboration with key public and private stakeholders. The potential applicant must also have established a Reentry Task Force comprised of specific justice system and community representation. These requirements are specifically enumerated in the solicitation.

6. Are there specific requirements that must be adhered to for the program?

As required by the program, all applications must provide or address the following information:

- A reentry strategic plan that describes the long-term strategy and incorporates a detailed reentry implementation schedule and sustainability plan for the program.
- The role of local, governmental, agencies and nonprofit organizations that will be coordinated by, and that will collaborate on, the offender reentry strategy of the applicant, and the certification the involvement of such agencies and organizations.
- A description of the evidence-based methodology and outcome measures that will be used to evaluate the program and a discussion of how such measurements will provide valid measures of the impact of the program.
- A description of how the project could be broadly replicated if demonstrated to be effective.
- Documentation that reflects explicit support of the chief executive officer of the applicant agency (ies).
- An extensive discussion of the role of state corrections departments, community corrections agencies, and/or local jail systems in ensuring successful reentry of offenders into their communities.
- Extensive evidence of collaboration with state and local government agencies overseeing health, mental health, housing, child welfare, education, substance abuse, victims services, and employment services, and with local law enforcement agencies.
- A plan for the analysis of the statutory, regulatory, rules-based, and practice-based hurdles to reintegration of offenders into the community.
- Documentation reflecting the establishment of a Reentry Task Force.
- Include letters of support from corrections officials responsible for facilities or offenders to be served through this project.

7. What is the deadline for submitting an application?

All applications are due by 8:00 p.m. e.t. on April 20, 2009. Please refer to “Deadline: Applications” within the solicitation for more information.

8. What is the potential project length for an award?

Awards under this program will be for a period of 12 months with the ability for no-cost extensions. A grantee may be eligible for continued funding for an additional two award periods, contingent upon the availability of funds and demonstration of adequate progress toward meeting established goals of the program.

9. What are the award amounts for projects?

Contingent upon the availability of funds and the number of offenders projected to be served, awards of up to \$750,000 will be made.

10. What is the definition of “recidivism”?

The Second Chance Act requires that recidivism be a measurement of success for receiving funding under the legislation. For purposes of this program, “recidivism” is defined as:

“A return to prison and/or jail with either a new conviction or as the result of a violation of the terms of supervision within 12 months of initial release.”

11. Does the reduction in recidivism requirements apply only to those offenders participating in the program, or to the agency's whole population (target population vs. overall population)?

For purposes of this program, recidivism is defined as “...a return to prison and/or jail with either a new conviction or as the result of a violation of the terms of supervision within 12 months of initial release.” This will apply only to the target population identified for the project.

12. Regarding the requirement to reduce recidivism by 50 percent in five years, would a cohort study pertaining to this be acceptable, or must it be 50 percent of the current target population?

Every effort will be made to determine a “baseline” recidivism rate for the initial target population so that changes in the baseline rate will reflect successful movement toward the overall goal of a 50 percent reduction in the baseline rate within five years.

13. Will the 50 percent reduction be targeted to specific populations (i.e., high risk/special need), or be across all risk/need levels?

The Second Chance Act only requires applicants to include as a “goal” of their strategic reentry plan that they reduce recidivism by 50 percent over five years. Though applicants will be required to track and report on performance measures, they will not be required to achieve a 50 percent reduction in recidivism rates. The 50 percent reduction in recidivism goal will be applied to the target population identified in the application. We need to emphasize that the 50 percent reduction is a “goal” and not a requirement.

14. Will the baseline time period be considered the period when the agency first began reentry/risk reduction efforts, or specifically from the time the federal grant begins?

The baseline should reflect the current recidivism rates for the target population at the time of award of the grant.

15. Are there any priority considerations that will be given when evaluating applications for awards?

Yes, priority considerations will be given to applications that contain the following information:

- Focus the initiative on geographic areas with a disproportionate population of offenders released from prisons or jails.
- Include input from nonprofit organizations, in any case where relevant input is available and appropriate, consultation with crime victims and offenders who are released from prisons and jails. and coordination with families of offenders.
- Demonstrate effective case assessment and management abilities in order to provide a comprehensive and continuous reentry process, including, but not limited to, planning while offenders are incarcerated, pre-release transition housing, establishing pre-release planning procedures to ensure eligibility of an offender for federal or state benefits upon release, ensuring that offenders obtain all necessary referrals for reentry services, and delivery of continuous and appropriate drug treatment, medical care, job training and placement, educational services, or any other service or support needed for successful reentry.
- Provides for a review process by which the applicant adjudicates violations of parole, probation, or supervision following release from prison or jail, taking into account public safety and the use of graduated, community-based sanctions for minor and technical violations of parole, probation, or supervision (specifically those violations that are not otherwise, and independently, a violation of law).
- Provides for an independent evaluation of the reentry process that included, to the maximum extent possible, random assignment and controlled studies to determine the effectiveness of the process developed within the scope of the project.
- Target high-risk offenders for participation in the reentry process through validated assessment tools.

16. What does the “Reentry Task Force” consist of?

Each applicant must establish or empower a Reentry Task Force as a condition of funding receipt. Some of the purposes of the reentry task force will be to:

- Examine ways to pool resources and funding streams to reduce recidivism rates.
- Minimize harmful effects of offenders’ time incarcerated or detained upon their families and communities.
- Collect data and information on best practices in offender reentry from demonstration grantees and other agencies.
- The task force shall be comprised of government leaders and agency representatives from relevant state, tribal, territorial, or local entities; service providers; nonprofit organizations; and other key stakeholders

17. Are units of local government applying for funds required to collaborate with the state's Reentry Task Force? If yes, what type of support is required by the state Reentry Task Force (i.e., letter of support, letter of commitment, etc.)?

Title I, Subtitle A, Section 101(e)(1) states "...reflects explicit support of the chief executive officer of the State, unit of local government, territory, or Indian Tribe applying for a grant under this section;" No mention of a "state- level council on reentry..." It would appear that a letter of support would be sufficient.

18. Is there a match requirement for this program?

The federal share of a grant received under this program may not exceed 50 percent of the project funded under the grant. The recipient of a grant under this program must provide 25 percent of the total project cost in "cash" match. Twenty percent of the total project cost may be matched by making "in-kind" contributions of goods or services that are directly related to the purpose for which the grant was awarded. Federal funds received under this section and cash match provided by the grantee shall be used to supplement, not supplant, non-federal funds that would otherwise be available for the activities funded under this section.

19. What is acceptable as a cash match? If an applicant receives federal stimulus funds (i.e., The Recovery Act) for employment strategies, can that be considered as an acceptable cash match?

Federal dollars cannot be used as match for other federal grants. The 25 percent hard cash match required for demonstration projects must be either state general fund dollars of, perhaps, private foundation match dollars.

20. From the current information, 25 percent of the match needs to be "cash" and not targeted for reentry. For some jurisdictions programming and treatment is being provided to successful reentry, but with budget cuts everything is targeted to assisting and preparing for successful release. Is this feasible?

BJA recognizes this is not easy to do with the 25 percent "cash" requirement for the award. However, the cash match requirement must include new money, not funds utilized or targeted to support an existing program. The critical issues are that this 25 percent must be "hard cash," not in-kind services that may supplant existing services.

21. Is the cash match an up-front payment or due by the end of the period?

When the grant is submitted the budget will have to reflect the 25 percent cash match requirement and that money will need to be allocated in the budget to indicate specific services that it will support. Money commitment needs to be upfront and the budget needs to reflect how that 25 percent cash match and 25 percent in-kind is allocated.

22. Could program funds be used to develop transitional and independent living programs for offenders who are 16-18 years old?

No. The target population for the initiative must be a specific sub-set of the population of individuals ages 18 and older convicted as an adult and imprisoned in a state, local, or tribal prison or jail. The program must be comprehensive and meet the requirements of the Second Chance Act including a Reentry Task Force and strategic reentry plan.

23. What are some examples of how performance measures from the Second Chance Act Prisoner Reentry Initiative will include operational definitions from past programs?

This is the first solicitation for Second Chance Act (Demonstration Grants). The performance measures will be very simple and require the tracking of key data points. An example would be the Performance Measure "A reduction in recidivism rates for the target population," which will require the grantee to provide the following data points:

- Number of new offenders added to the target population (TP) this quarter.

- Total number of TP in the initiative.
- Number of TP resentenced to prison with a new conviction this quarter.
- Total number of TP resentenced to prison with a new conviction since the beginning of the initiative.

24. What is the clarification for the following terms: target population and validated assessment?

The “target population” can be any subset of offenders currently incarcerated in prison or jail. The “validated assessment” speaks to the use of a nationally-recognized instrument that has been demonstrated to have efficacy in measuring risk and needs.

25. Under the “increase in opportunities” performance measure (i.e., employment, education, and housing), are the grantees establishing a baseline and measuring changes in capacity or measuring changes in numbers accessing services?

The grantees will be asked to measure changes in numbers accessing services.

26. Can program funds be used for the hiring of positions such as a Release Planning and Reentry Coordinator and an Institutional Parole Officer?

Grant funds can be used to employ staff, but they cannot be used to supplant existing services. In addition, the employed staff positions must be in the context of the overall program or project.

27. If staff positions are created from awarded funds, will there be future federal funding available to assist grantees in sustaining those positions?

The Second Chance Act calls for an initial one-year grant with the possibility for two additional grants if satisfactory progress toward the overall goal of reducing recidivism can be documented. To date, the Second Chance Act was authorized for only two years and ending in Fiscal Year 2010. Currently there is movement to have this legislation reauthorized for future years. However, all awards are subject to the availability of appropriated funds and any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law, and we cannot state with absolute certainty that funds will always be available to grantees. It is suggested that award recipients implement a sustainability plan once/if federal funds are no longer available.

28. If grantees cannot "hire" new county employees to fill the aforementioned positions, can program funds be used to outsource these positions?

Yes, grant funds can be used to subcontract or outsource personnel positions or services for offenders.

29. Can an agency apply to serve just the juvenile or just the adult population, or does an application need to cover reentry for the entire age range?

Applicants should focus their projects on adult offenders (ages 18 and older). The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention hopes to release a separate solicitation that focuses on juvenile offenders.

30. Can grant funding be used to employ the "outside evaluator"?

Yes it can be used for this purpose, but BJA will not require each individual grantee to provide for an independent evaluation.

31. Will there be an evaluation component to this grant where a national organization is collecting data?

It is anticipated that the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) will conduct an in-depth evaluation at a later date and the performance metrics data set will be a vital component to such an evaluation.

32. How will the evaluations funded through NIJ be different than the ones funded through demonstration grants?

BJA does not anticipate funding individual project evaluations. NIJ will conduct general and in-depth evaluations of selected projects.

33. What is the definition of a “high risk” offender?

There is no official definition contained in the Second Chance Act for “high risk” offenders. However, an applicant should use the definition adopted by their particular jurisdiction. In identifying the target population applicants should be mindful of the requirement to track participants on a quarterly basis.

34. Are there any stipulations regarding offenders convicted of a sexually related crime (sex offenders), or funds being utilized for a sex offender reentry project?

There are no stipulations on sex-related crimes under this program so sex offenders may be served with awarded funds. In addition, a sex offender reentry project is allowable if a particular jurisdiction identifies returning sex offenders as part of their target population.

35. Will there be a specific award amount for each jurisdiction, or the establishment of an award range? Will all jurisdictions get equal amounts or will it vary?

Contingent upon the availability of funds and the number of offenders projected to be served, awards of up to \$750,000 will be made.

36. Will funds be available for housing given restrictions on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding being utilized for offenders?

Yes, BJA funding under this program can be used for housing services.

37. Will all data be submitted into one data base, or will agencies have to work with multiple data systems such as those managed by various federal agencies (i.e., U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Labor, etc)?

This program will be administered by the U.S. Department of Justice (Bureau of Justice Assistance) and will include only a DOJ-managed database for performance metrics.

38. Will there be any limits on the use of the funds, such as will the funds be available for costs of treatment such as substance abuse or mental health?

Grant funds can be used to support the full range of reentry-related services such as substance abuse/mental health treatment, housing support, employment mentoring, family reunification, counseling, etc.

39. If a state entity applies for funding, is the applicant agency required to concentrate efforts on offenders returning to a specific geographic community, or can it be a statewide initiative (regardless of community where offender is returning)?

The applicant identifies the target population (TP). Applicants need to be aware of the requirements to establish a baseline recidivism rate for the TP and the need to track the members of the TP on a quarterly basis.

40. Can grant funds be used to enhance existing reentry programs, or are funds limited to new programs?

Federal funds cannot be used to supplant existing services. Federal funds provided under the Second Chance Act are meant to be one of the sources of program funding. They may not to be used to replace other funding sources.

41. Whom do I need to contact regarding a new and unique holistic approach to match, manage, and monitor reentry?

BJA encourages applicants to make an effort to “sell” the concept to a political entity that may be applying for a SCA grant so that your organization might be a sub-contractor to provide the unique service. When the National Adult and Juvenile Reentry Resource Center is established, part of its mission will be to collect information on programs and ideas that represent “promising practices” and make the information available nationally.

42. Can a collaboration of entities apply as one applicant?

Yes; however, one unit of government or a tribe must be designated as the official applicant. Priority consideration will be given to applications that reflect a high degree of collaboration.

43. If state is not applying, can more than one city apply in that state?

Yes, it is possible for several cities, counties, and the state to apply since all are independent political jurisdictions.

44. Is there a percentage breakdown for allocation to state versus local government?

No; BJA is cognizant of the need for geographical distribution as well as some level of equity among states, locals, and tribes.

45. How will submissions from multiple jurisdictions in the same state be viewed?

Submissions from multiple jurisdictions in the same state will be viewed on the individual merit of each application that meets the basic requirements.

46. How would it reflect on a state if multiple agencies applied from that state?

There will be no impact on the state.

47. Can victims be directly served from program funding?

The Second Chance Act only encourages consultation with victims of crime. There is no specific mandate to serve victims and it would have to be carefully demonstrated in an application how using the funds for victims services would facilitate reentry and reduce recidivism.

48. Can a county-located prison apply for funding?

Yes. The county prison board could work with the county commission and submit a collaborative and comprehension project proposal targeting the reentry of offenders released from the county prison back into the local community. In all probability, the county would have to be the official applicant.

49. Is there someone specific to contact with questions about the process or program?

For programmatic questions, please contact Dr. Gary L. Dennis, BJA Senior Policy Advisor for Corrections, at gary.dennis@usdoj.gov or 202-305-9059.